Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application:

1-14. (Cancelled)

15. (Withdrawn) A method for producing a socketed biaxially oriented thermoplastic tube starting from a prefabricated tube of biaxially oriented thermoplastic material having a tube body and an integral end part at at least one end of said tube body, said end part having a greater wall thickness than the tube body, the axial stretching of the end part being at least equal to the axial stretching of the tube body, the method comprising the step of subject an end part of said prefabricated tube to a socket-forming operation.

16. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 15, in which an end part of the prefabricated tube has a plurality of annular areas which adjoin one another and have a wall thickness which varies from annular area to adjoining annular area, the wall thickness of a plurality of the annular areas being greater than the wall thickness of the tube body.

17. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 15, in which an end part of the prefabricated tube has a plurality of annular areas which adjoin one another and have a wall thickness which varies from annular area to adjoining annular area, the wall thickness of a plurality of the annular areas being greater than the wall thickness of the tube body, and in which

an annular area of said end part having a larger wall thickness than the tube body is deformed, during said socket-forming operation, into an outwardly bulging groove wall, which delimits an internal groove in the socketed tube for the accommodation of a sealing ring.

18. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 15, in which an end part of the prefabricated tube has a plurality of annular areas which adjoin one another and have a wall thickness which varies from annular area to adjoining annular area, the wall thickness of a plurality of the annular areas being greater than the wall thickness of the tube body, and in which an annular area of said end part with a larger wall thickness projects inwardly with respect to the internal diameter of the tube body following the socket-forming operation.

19. (Withdrawn) A biaxially oriented thermoplastic tube, which tube has a tube body and, at one or both ends, an integrally formed socket, said tube having an axial stretching of the plastics material in the socket which is substantially equal to the axial stretching of the thermoplastic material in the tube body.

20. (Withdrawn) A biaxially oriented thermoplastic tube, which tube has a tube body and, at one or both ends thereof, an integrally formed socket, the socket having an outwardly bulging groove wall which delimits an internal groove in the tube for the accommodation of a sealing ring, wherein the groove wall has a wall thickness which is greater than or equal to adjacent parts of the socket which have a smaller diameter.

21. (Withdrawn) A biaxially oriented thermoplastic tube, which tube has a tube body and, at one end, an integrally formed socket and, at the other end, a spigot designed to fit into a socket of a similar tube, wherein the spigot has a greater wall thickness than the tube body.

22. (Cancelled).

23. (Currently amended) An improved method for producing a biaxially oriented tube from thermoplastic material~~, in particular polyolefin plastics material~~, wherein a tubular preform is extruded from thermoplastic material using an extruder which is provided with an extruder die having an inner core, the inner core defining an axial hollow space in the preform, wherein the preform is subjected to a temperature conditioning of the preform, so that a tempered preform is obtained having an orientation temperature which is suitable for the thermoplastic material of said preform, and wherein the tempered preform is forced over a dimensionally stable mandrel, which mandrel comprises an expansion part having an outer surface which substantially corresponds to the surface of a truncated cone, which mandrel brings about expansion of the tempered preform in the circumferential direction of the tempered preform forced over said mandrel, in such a manner that said preform is transformed into a biaxially oriented tube with thermoplastic material which is oriented in axial direction and in circumferential direction of the tube, wherein said biaxially oriented tube is cooled, the method comprising the use of a preform speed-control means which acts on the preform upstream of the mandrel and of a drawing device which is arranged downstream of the mandrel and acts on the tube, the improvement including the measure that the outer surface of the expansion part of the mandrel is provided, at a plurality

of locations around the circumference of the expansion part, with elongate grooves and/or ribs which extend in the axial direction, said grooves and/or ribs causing a reduction in the wall thickness variation of the biaxially oriented tube.

24. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 23, wherein a film of liquid is formed between the expansion part of the mandrel and the preform.

25. (Currently amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim ~~22~~ 23, ~~in which~~ wherein, the expansion part is provided with axial grooves which are formed at regular angular intervals~~, preferably of between about 3 ° and about 10 °,~~ in the outer surface of the expansion part~~, and in which the grooves are preferably at most 5 millimetres deep, particularly preferably between 0.5 and 3 millimetres deep~~.

26–29. (Cancelled)

30. (New) The method according to claim 25, wherein the regular angular intervals are between about 3 ° and about 10 °.

31. (New) The method according to claim 23, wherein the grooves are at most about 5 millimetres deep.

32. (New) The method according to claim 23, wherein the grooves are between about 0.5 and about 3 millimetres deep.